

**CLIENT-SIDE METHOD FOR IDENTIFYING AN OPTIMUM SERVER****ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A client player performs a query to a nameserver against a network map of Internet traffic  
5 conditions. The query is made asking for a particular service (e.g., RTSP) via a particular  
protocol (TCP) in a particular domain. In response, the nameserver returns a set of one or more  
tokens, with each token defining a machine or, in the preferred embodiment, a group of  
machines, from which the player should seek to obtain the stream. The player may then  
optionally perform one or more tests to determine which of a set of servers provides a best  
10 quality of service for the stream. That server is then used to retrieve the stream. Periodically, the  
client player code repeats the query during stream playback to determine whether there is a better  
source for the stream. If a better source exists, the player performs a switch to the better stream  
source "on the fly" if appropriate to maintain and/or enhance the quality of service. Preferably,  
the client player publishes data identifying why it selected a particular server, and such data may  
15 be used to augment the network map used for subsequent request routing determinations.